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FM THE WHITE HOUSE TOHAK 43

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WHITE HOUSE
SITUATION ROOM

SECTION ONE OF TWO

TOHAK 43

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS
APPLY

DECEMBER 5, 1972

FROM: RICHARD T. KENNEDY

TO: PETER W. RODMAN FOR GENERAL HAIG FOR HENRY A. KISSINGER

REF: TOHAK 36

MORI/CDF C03317569

ATTACHED IS THE ITEM YOU REQUESTED.

WM. F. BUCKLEY, JR. FOR NEWSWEEK

IT HAS BEEN A WHILE SINCE THE BOYS REFERRED TO PRESIDENT THIEU AS OUR PUPPET, AND ALTHOUGH THE TERM WAS USED AS DEROGATION DURING ALL THOSE YEARS, THEY WISH NOW, MOST OF THEM, THAT HE WERE IN FACT OUR PUPPET, THAT HE WOULD SIMPLY SHUT UP AND DO AS HENRY KISSINGER TELLS HIM TO DO. THIS THEY DESIRE FOR TWO REASONS, ONE OF THEM COMMENDABLE, THE OTHER LESS SO. THEY WANT THE VIETNAM WAR TO END (OR AT LEAST INSOFAR AS WE ARE CONNECTED WITH IT IN ANY WAY). AND THEY WOULD LIKE TO SEE THEIR OWN VATICINATIONS WRITTEN INTO HISTORY. THEY HAVE ALL ALONG BEEN SAYING THAT BECAUSE IT WAS ALWAYS, REALLY, A CIVIL WAR, AND BECAUSE THE VIET CONG, FOR ALL THAT THEIR PRACTICES ARE OCCASIONALLY UNPLEASANT, WERE ALWAYS THE TRULY INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATIVES OF THE POST-COLONIAL INDOCHINESE CULTURE, THEREFORE THE COMMUNISTS WOULD PREVAIL, AND SHOULD.

HENRY KISSINGER IS MOST DEFINITELY NOT A MEMBER OF THIS GROUP. HIS VIEWS ON THE VIETNAM WAR, AND THE ONLY SATISFACTORY MEANS OF TERMINATING IT, WERE NICELY STATED IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS EARLY IN 1969, IN AN ESSAY HE WROTE JUST BEFORE HE LEFT OFF WRITING ABOUT HISTORY IN ORDER TO MAKE HISTORY: AND IN THAT ARTICLE HE SAID, AS PLAINLY AS ANY PROFESSOR CAN, NOT ONLY THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS A STAKE IN VIETNAM, BUT THAT THE REST OF THE WORLD HAS A STAKE IN AMERICA'S STAKE IN VIETNAM.

BUT NOW HENRY KISSINGER IS UP AGAINST IT. HE HAS PUSHED THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ABOUT AS FAR AS HE CAN. AFTER HIS RETURN FROM PARIS AND SAIGON HE TOLD ONE FRIEND JUBILANTLY THAT IF IN ADVANCE OF THAT TRIP NIXON HAD PUBLICIZED AS NON-NEGOTIABLE TERMS FOR A CEASE-FIRE THE CONCESSIONS THE NORTH VIETNAMESE HAD GONE ON TO MAKE, "NIXON WOULD HAVE BEEN DENOUNCED BY NATIONAL REVIEW AS BEING TOO INTRANSIGENT." WELL, THE NORTH VIETNAMESE FOR REASONS INSCRUTABLE AND NOT-SO-INSCRUTABLE, CAPITULATED: PRISONERS RELEASED; NO COALITION GOVERNMENT; A FACE-SAVING TRIPARTITE ADVISORY BODY OF NATIONAL CONCILIATION WHOSE RECOMMENDATIONS WOULD BE OPERATIVE ONLY WHEN MADE UNANIMOUSLY; PRESIDENT THIEU IN DIRECT CHARGE OF ONE-THIRD OF THE MEMBERSHIP OF SAID BOARD; THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM MEANWHILE DIRECTLY GOVERNED BY THIEU; WITHDRAWAL OF NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS FROM CAMBODIA AND LAOS; RETENTION OF U.S. BASES IN THAILAND; PROVISIONING OF NORTH VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS IN THE SOUTH ONLY TO THE POINT OF MAINTENANCE ...

NORTH VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS IN THE SOUTH!

THE NORTH VIETNAMESE UNSMILINGLY TELL YOU THAT THERE ARE NO NORTH VIETNAMESE IN THE SOUTH, THE U.S. COUNTERPART OF WHICH WOULD BE TO DECLARE SOLEMNLY, SAY IN THE UNITED NATIONS, THAT THERE IS NO NEGRO PROBLEM IN THE SOUTH FOR THE SIMPLE REASON THAT THERE ARE NO NEGROES IN THE SOUTH. HOW, SAY THE NORTH VIETNAMESE, CAN WE BE ASKED TO "REPATRIATE" SOLDIERS WHO ARE REALLY SOUTH VIETNAMESE TO BEGIN WITH, WHOM WE FEEL MERELY A HUMANE OBLIGATION TO CONTINUE TO PROVISION?

THIS HAS BECOME THE STICKING POINT. THOSE WHO FEEL IMPATIENT WITH THE INTRANSIGENCE OF PRESIDENT THIEU SHOULD HOWEVER ASK THEMSELVES WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE ATTITUDE OF, SAY, CHARLES DE GAULLE IF, IN ORDER TO SHORTEN THE WORLD WAR, HE HAD PROPOSED TO HIM A CEASE-FIRE THAT PROVIDED FOR THE INDEFINITE GOVERNMENT OF A HALF DOZEN FRENCH DEPARTMENTS BY THE NAZI ARMY.

EXACTLY. THIEU IS EXACTLY RIGHT.

BUT SO IS RICHARD NIXON RIGHT. RIGHT IN SAYING THAT THE TIME HAS MORE OR LESS COME WHEN THE UNITED STATES HAS TO EASE AWAY. IN 1970 WE BEGAN TO EASE AWAY. OVER A PERIOD OF TWO YEARS WE REDUCED OUR FORCES IN VIETNAM BACK TO THE STATUS OF MILITARY ADVISORS. WE WERE SUDDENLY CALLED UPON, IN RESPONSE TO THE MAY OFFENSIVE, TO USE OUR NAVY AND AIR FORCE A OUTRANCE, AND WE'RE STILL DOING IT. THE POLITICAL TEMPER IN AMERICA REQUIRES THAT WE CONTINUE TO DISENGAGE: AND THIS MEANS, IN EFFECT, A CEASE-FIRE. THIS IS REQUIRED FOR REASONS PALPABLE AND IMPALPABLE. TO CONTINUE THE AERIAL BOMBARDMENT AND THE BLOCKADE WOULD COST -- JUST THESE TWO OPERATIONS -- FOUR BILLION DOLLARS DURING CALENDAR 1973. IT ISN'T OBVIOUS THAT CONGRESS WILL PASS ALONG THE MONEY, NOTWITHSTANDING THE PRESIDENTIAL LANDSLIDE. BUT MORE THAN THAT, THE AMERICAN PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT THE TIME HAS COME TO TERMINATE OUR INVOLVEMENT PROVIDED THAT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED ON REASONABLE TERMS, AND THE TERMS ARE ADJUDGED AS -- REASONABLE.

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FINAL SECTION OF TWO

TOHAK 43

PUT DIFFERENTLY: IF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ADHERE TO THE TERMS OF THE CEASE-FIRE, THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ENCLAVES WITHIN SOUTH VIETNAM WILL IN THE MONTHS AND YEARS TO COME NO MORE COMPROMISE THE DE FACTO SOVEREIGNTY OF SOUTH VIETNAM THAN GUANTANAMO COMPROMISES THE DE FACTO SOVEREIGNTY OF CUBA. IN BOTH CASES IT IS A BURR THAT GNAWS AT THE NATIONAL PRIDE. BUT INCONCLUSIVE ENDS TO PROTRACTED WARS ARE SOMETIMES BETTER THAN CONCLUSIVE ENDS: AND SOMETIMES THERE IS NO OTHER WAY.

IF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE DO NOT INTEND TO ABIDE BY THE TERMS OF THE CEASE-FIRE IT HARDLY MAKES THAT MUCH OF A DIFFERENCE THAT THEY SHOULD HAVE 100,000 OF THEIR MEN BELEAGUED HERE AND THERE IN THE SOUTH. THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES WILL PRESUMABLY PLEDGE TO VISIT THE WRATH OF OUR MILITARY ON FRESH AGGRESSION IN VIOLATION OF THE TERMS OF THE CEASE-FIRE. CHINA AND THE SOVIET UNION, FOR ELABORATE BUT ELABORATABLE REASONS, ARE PROBABLY DISINCLINED TO ENCOURAGE A VIOLATION OF THE CEASE-FIRE. CHINA AND THE SOVIET UNION, FOR ELABORATE BUT ELABORATABLE REASONS, ARE PROBABLY DISINCLINED TO ENCOURAGE A VIOLATION OF THE CEASE-FIRE ON A MASSIVE SCALE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. IT IS A GAMBLE, OF COURSE. AND AN AMERICAN SYMPATHETIC TO THE MEANING OF THE VIETNAM WAR, ADMIRING OF THIEU, AND CONSIDERATE OF THE LIMITATIONS IMPOSED BY CONTEMPORARY REALITY ON RICHARD NIXON, SEEKS AN ADROIT FORMULA FOR SAYING TO THIEU: GET EVERY SINGLE THING YOU CAN. AND THEN -- DO NOT MERELY GO ALONG, GO ALONG WITH PUBLIC ENTHUSIASM.

THIS IS IMPORTANT PRIMARILY FOR THE UNITED STATES, BUT INDIRECTLY FOR THIEU HIMSELF. FOR THE UNITED STATES IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WHEN WE PULL OUT OF VIETNAM, WE SHALL IN THE VIEW OF THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD, HAVE CONSUMMATED OUR PURPOSE. SINCE THIS WILL NOT HAVE BEEN OBJECTIVELY CONSUMMATED, IN THE SENSE OF HAVING REDUCED THE NORTH VIETNAMESE AGGRESSIVE POTENTIAL TO RUBBLE, THE SITUATION IS LEFT AMBIGUOUS. IT IS, THEREFORE, ONLY THIEU WHO CAN CONVINCINGLY PRONOUNCE UPON WHAT AMERICA DID ACCOMPLISH. IF HE ANNOUNCES TO THE WORLD THAT HE HAS BEEN BETRAYED BY THE UNITED STATES, QUITE APART FROM THE DAMAGE HE DOES HIMSELF IN TERMS OF PROSPECTIVE AID FROM THE UNITED STATES AND A NEW CRISIS, HE UNDERMINES THE HISTORICAL POINT WE HAVE SOUGHT TO MAKE: THAT THE UNITED STATES CAN BE TAKEN AT ITS WORD; THAT OUR TREATIES MEAN SOMETHING; THAT THE NATIONS OF EUROPE, AND OF THE MIDDLE EAST, AND IN THE PACIFIC AND SOUTH PACIFIC, CAN VIEW THE INDOCHINESE EXPERIENCE AS A HISTORICAL VALIDATION OF AMERICA'S WORD, ON WHICH THEY THEMSELVES DEPEND, SHOULD THEY FIND THEMSELVES LYING IN THE WAY OF TOMORROW'S AGGRESSIVE SALIENT. SOUTH VIETNAM NEEDS TO BE A CONTINUING MEMBER OF A WORLD FRATERNITY THAT LOOKS UPON THE UNITED STATES IF NOT WITH AWE, AT LEAST WITH RESPECT, AND PERHAPS IN DUE COURSE, WITH EVEN A LITTLE PRIDE.

HAVING ASCERTAINED THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE NEGOTIATORS IN PARIS WILL NOT GO FURTHER -- PERHAPS CANNOT GO FURTHER (THE NORTH VIETNAMESE RULERS ARE THEMSELVES DIVIDED: THERE ARE THOSE WHO ARE BITTER AGAINST THE CONCESSIONS ALREADY MADE IN PARIS) -- THIEU'S ALTERNATIVE REDUCES NOT ONLY TO PETULANCE BUT TO THE KIND OF BITTER SELF-ISOLATION WHICH IS ITSELF AN ADDED INDUCEMENT TO RE-NEWED AGGRESSION FROM THE NORTH, AND FATALISTIC DEMORALIZATION AT HOME.

END

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